

counsel to then Governor Bush and counsel to the President of the United States.

I am truly inspired by Judge Gonzales and his outstanding contributions to our Nation. He is a highly qualified nominee who is a true American success story and a source of pride for Hispanics across the country.

I urge my colleagues across the Chamber to do what is best for America and confirm Judge Gonzales.

MISSING \$9 BILLION IN IRAQ

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, the state of the Union is asleep. This administration cannot account for \$9 billion it controlled in Iraq for a 9-month period ending last October. Wake up, America.

While \$9 billion went unaccounted for, the administration did not have enough money for bullet-proof vests or armor-plated protection for troops. It fought against increasing the combat death benefit and cut veterans benefits. Yet, for 9 months, an average of \$30 million a day, totaling \$9 billion, could not be accounted for by the administration's Coalition Provisional Authority, according to the Inspector General. Do we hear a grand jury stirring?

Was the \$9 billion stolen? Was it used for bribes for peace or rent-a-friend or a paid assassin program? Was it funneled elsewhere to spend money to foment chaos, disorder and violence?

The administration could not find WMDs, Osama bin Laden, and now \$9 billion is unaccounted for. They want another \$80 billion, while Halliburton makes a killing on overcharges. And they want us to trust them with Social Security? I do not think so.

Wake up, America. Your democracy is disappearing.

JUDGE ALBERTO GONZALES

(Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the attempts to delay and derail the confirmation of Alberto Gonzales as Attorney General of the United States are wrong and objectionable.

This is the fifth time that President Bush has asked Alberto Gonzales to serve his country. As counsel to the President, as chief advisor to then Governor Bush, as a Texas Supreme Court justice, as Texas Secretary of State, Alberto Gonzales has always served his Governor, his President and his country with honor, integrity and distinction.

This man of humble beginnings who has achieved so much personifies the American dream. Hispanics throughout America are proud of him, as all Americans will be of our next Attorney Gen-

eral. Enough obstruction rooted in petty partisanship. It is time for the Senate to confirm Alberto Gonzales as United States Attorney General.

WOMEN AND SOCIAL SECURITY

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to denounce the phony Social Security crisis that the President is trying to sell the American public. As the new Democratic Chair of the Women's Caucus, I am especially concerned because women are the first targets to be thrown off the lifeboat. Women account for 70 percent of all Social Security beneficiaries older than 85 years of age. Women depend more on Social Security because they often live longer than their spouses, anywhere from 7 to 10 years. Many have less retirement savings because they stopped working to raise their children and to take time out to take care of a family member.

In the community I represent in East Los Angeles and the San Gabriel Valley, there are nearly 60,000 Social Security beneficiaries. Many are disabled women, widows and wives who rely very heavily on their hard-earned monthly Social Security benefits.

Democrats believe that all American workers should get the benefits they paid into. We will fight to improve the Social Security system, not dismantle it. As one of my colleagues said, "Let's not throw grandma out with the bath water."

IRAQI ELECTIONS

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, 3 weeks ago, I was able to go to Amman, Jordan, with the Iraqi Women's Caucus to meet with candidates for the upcoming election. I have got a few e-mails from some of them since the election that I would like to share.

One wrote:

"My finger is still the color of ink and I'm not afraid. It is a shame to be afraid while others who couldn't walk on their legs, but they came to the ballot stations and voted and dipped their fingers in ink. I am very proud of my people. Yes, they suffered a lot and they wanted to end this suffering. The first step was their voting without fear."

Another one said:

"We heard an explosion that was made by a suicide bomber, but I was very surprised and so proud when I saw other people who didn't yet vote go, 'Ha ha ha. It is okay. The terrorists cannot prevent us from voting and we will vote after half an hour from this explosion.'"

Another one wrote saying:

"It is a great honor for us as candidates to represent this people which

proved they were true living nation in spite of mass graves which was made by the last regime and terrorists. The Iraqis which I have the honor to be one of them were braver than their leaders."

Finally, the last e-mail I received:

"It was a big day."

To my friends, the candidates in the Iraq election, I am very proud of you. I am very proud of the Iraqi people. I, too, agree it was a very big day, not just for Iraq but for the world.

OUSTER OF VETERANS COMMITTEE CHAIR

(Mr. STRICKLAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, my Republican colleagues are willing to stand on this floor in support of nominee Gonzales, but the sad fact is they were not willing to stand up and support their own colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH).

The gentleman from New Jersey is arguably the most pro-life Member of this House, a true conservative. But that was not enough for this Republican leadership. This good man, who had been on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for 24 years, was removed of that committee, deprived of his chairmanship, because he spoke out for veterans and their needs.

Speaker HASTERT received a letter from 10 national veterans' organizations, the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Vietnam Veterans of America, Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS, Blinded Veterans Association, Jewish War Veterans and Non-commissioned Officers, all urging Speaker HASTERT to keep the gentleman from New Jersey as the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. He was removed.

If your leadership can do it to the gentleman from New Jersey, it can do it to you, my friends.

FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION ACT

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, 1 month ago, we stood in this assembled Chamber and pledged ourselves to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. Chief among the rights enumerated in that Constitution is the freedom of the press. Unfortunately, last year almost a dozen reporters were served or threatened with jail sentences in at least three different Federal jurisdictions for refusing to reveal confidential sources. Compelling reporters to testify and, in particular, compelling them to reveal the identity of their confidential sources is a detriment to the public interest. Without the promise of confidentiality, many important conduits